

Copy

November 4, 1931

Dear Mr. Farguhar:

(Rough original)

Thanks for your reply of Oct. 26, '31 to my inquiry about using extracts from "Place Names in the High Sierra"

I have again considered the matter of "Mt. Corcoran" an early decision of this Board, and your view that it should be vacated in favor of Langley, so-called by Marshall on the Mt. Whitney quads, beginning in 1907, two years after the field work under the direction of E. M. Douglas, Geographer of the Geol. Survey in 1905. I examined all of the maps of the Survey, yesterday, including the hand-made original and I find Mt. Langley in place of Mt. Corcoran. I am inclined to the opinion that the Geological Survey was very careless in this matter rather than suggest a deliberate disregard of the formal decision of the Geographic Board which was rendered 14 years before the Mt. Whitney quad surveys were made in the field, and 16 years before the first quad was published in 1907. Henry Gannett, of the Geological Survey, was the most influential member of the Board in 1891, a charter member, and was active as chairman for many years prior to his death in 1914; and Marcus Baker, also of the Geol. Surv. was Secretary of the Board until his death in 1903.

The Executive Order of Sept. 4, 1890, was intended to cover just such cases as this and the fellows in the survey with whom I talked yesterday, were, in part, on duty in 1907 when the first Mt. Whitney quad was made. They were unable, however, to explain the error but admitted it and made a note on the record map for the guidance of those who will supervise the publication of the next reprint of the Mt. Whitney quad.

As to the name Corcoran for this mountain, there can be no possibility of error. Its adoption on Feb. 2, 1891, following Wheeler's Report in 1889, to which you refer in "Place Names" was no doubt a confirmation of Bierstadt's christening and was intended under authority, formally and finally, to give the mountain a permanent name. The decision of 1891, specifies "Not Mt. Whitney No. 1, Old Mt. Whitney,

nor Sheep Rock" showing full knowledge of the troubles of Clarence King and others discussed in "Place Names" by you. Later and prior to 1916, (I have not examined the cards), to insure identification the distance southeast of Mt. Whitney was added and also the facts that Mt. Corcoran was a summit of the Sierra Nevada and in both Inyo and Tulare counties, viz. on the common county boundary.

W. W. Corcoran, the creator of the magnificent Corcoran Gallery of Art, in Washington, and so well known here during his life as a philanthropist of seemingly unlimited resources and their disposal in the public interest, was the man removed first by Bierstadt, the great artist, and then by the Geographic Board, and I doubt very much the possibility of a revision such as you suggest. I think the Board will refuse to revoke a decision of 40 years standing especially where the conditions under which the name was adopted, its eminent propriety, its purpose both to eliminate errors and to honor a most distinguished citizen, are again considered by those who have succeeded to the responsibilities of the original Board. These considerations will be far more weighty than the perpetuation of a confessed error. The formal acceptance and approval of an action taken contrary to the text and purpose of the President who appointed this Board in 1890, or of those afterward who enlarged its duties and restated its authority, will be still more difficult.

Sincerely yours  
 Frank Bond,  
 Chairman